

# Bartlett Regional Hospital

3260 Hospital Drive, Juneau, Alaska 99801

907.796.8900

[www.bartletthospital.org](http://www.bartletthospital.org)

November 16, 2016

The Honorable Congressman Young  
2314 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Young:

We ask for your support ensuring Alaskans continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services in rural and Bush communities. The Rural Health Care Universal Service Support budget has remained static for 20 years and must be increased. The current \$400 million budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation, advances in technology and increased demand for services. The FCC expects that demand may exceed the cap for the first time in funding year 2016. An equivalent budget today, adjusted for inflation, would be about \$600 million.

Rural Health Care Universal Service Support is essential to enable providers to deliver affordable broadband telehealth services in Alaska's rural and Bush communities. Alaska received more than \$82 million in rural health care support for 2015, a substantial increase from 2014. If rural Alaskans are to continue to receive the affordable broadband telehealth services they need, the FCC must increase the rural health care budget and index it for inflation, as it recently did with E-rate. The FCC has updated the E-rate budget from \$2.25 billion in 1997 to \$3.94 billion for 2016, and indexed it for inflation, reflecting increases in demand.

Rural Health Care support enables Bartlett Regional Hospital to access telehealth services from Providence Hospital in Anchorage through our eICU program, accelerate diagnosis by facilitating communication with specialists in Seattle and Anchorage to whom we send x-ray and other files. Through improved telecommunications we avoid unnecessary medivacs and expand local treatment options. The Rural Health Care Program facilitates our being able to locally serve patients effectively and economically as possible.

Please urge the FCC to increase the rural health care universal service support budget, index it for inflation, and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years. This will ensure Alaska's rural and Bush communities continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth services, critical for improving access to care.

Thank you for your support.

  
Charles Bill, CEO  
[cbill@bartletthospital.org](mailto:cbill@bartletthospital.org)

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November 16, 2016

The Honorable Senator Sullivan  
702 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Sullivan:

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The Honorable Senator Murkowski  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski


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